



Dave Lambertson  
Interim Director

TELEPHONE: (323) 267-2101  
FACSIMILE: (323) 264-7135

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
Internal Services Department  
1100 North Eastern Avenue  
Los Angeles, California 90063



*Enriching Lives*

November 4, 2003

Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**APPROVE PURCHASE AMENDMENT FOR TELEPHONE-BASED  
INTERPRETATION SERVICES FOR COUNTY DEPARTMENTS  
(ALL DISTRICTS - 3 VOTES)**

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD:**

Authorize the Interim Director of the Internal Services Department or his designee to amend Purchase Order No. 31035862 with Language Line Services for telephone-based interpretation services for an amount not to exceed \$300,000.

**PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION**

In an October 6, 2003 memorandum to your Board, I reported that ISD discovered an error in the process used for the ordering and payment of "over-the-phone" interpretation services. Basically, the services had been ordered and paid for without a purchase order or contract.

Language Line Services is a firm that provides interpretation services (over the phone) to assist County departments in serving members of the public who do not speak English. The services are provided in a conference call format between the Language Line representative, the applicable County department and the caller. Essentially, when a department receives a call from an individual who does not speak English, the department calls a Language Line representative, who then provides interpretation services for the caller. The County is charged a fixed rate per minute for these services

and currently spends approximately \$46,000 a month. Each month, ISD pays Language Line for all services ordered through the County's centralized Telephone Utilities Budget and, along with their normal telephone expenses, bills the Language Line costs to the applicable County departments.

These services have been provided to the County for more than a decade. ISD has historically ordered and paid for Language Line services through what is termed a "Report of Miscellaneous Charges" (i.e., as opposed to via a purchase order or Board contract). The Report of Miscellaneous Charges payment process is the standard, acceptable approach for the payment of items such as utility and telephone expenditures.

Up until 1999, AT&T owned Language Line and, along with regular telephone services, provided the County with the interpretation services. In late 1999, AT&T Language Line Service was acquired by Providence Equity Partner, Inc.

Recently, we found that ISD was ordering and paying for telephone interpretation services in the same manner used to pay for routine telephone utility expenses (i.e., the Report of Miscellaneous Charge process). After conferring with County Counsel, we determined that these services should only have been ordered from AT&T, and subsequently from Language Line, Inc., with either a Board Contract or Purchase Order. It appears that, since AT&T was a telephone utility provider, staff assumed that it was appropriate to order and pay for the services using the same process allowed for normal telephone utility expenditures. As already indicated, this was incorrect.

As previously reported, in order to ensure the continuation of these critical interpretation services, a Purchase Order was issued to Language Line Services under ISD's statutory authority as County Purchasing Agent. However, the statutory limitation under the Purchasing Agent authority for services is \$100,000 and that amount will be exceeded before a formal solicitation and contract preparation process can be completed. Therefore, Board approval to spend beyond the \$100,000 limit is required.

Within 180 days, ISD will complete a formal solicitation for service and prepare a long-term contract recommendation for your Board's consideration and approval. This will enable County departments to continue to utilize phone-based interpretation services.



### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

The recommended action is consistent with the County Strategic Plan Goal of Fiscal Responsibility.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Annual interpretation costs are estimated to be \$550,000 during Fiscal Year 2003-04. There are sufficient funds appropriated within the FY 2003-04 Telephone Utilities Budget for these expenditures.

### **FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

Pursuant to Government Code Section 25502.5, the County's Purchasing Agent possesses the statutory authority to engage independent contractors to perform services for the County when the aggregate total cost does not exceed \$100,000. The authority to approve any limited or ongoing service requirements above this dollar threshold rests solely with the Board of Supervisors.

In order to eliminate the inappropriate use of the Report of Miscellaneous Charge process to order and pay for interpretation and translation services, a Purchase Order, under the authority of the Purchasing Agent, in the amount of \$99,999 was issued to Language Line Services. Board approval is required to order services beyond the \$100,000 threshold.

By this recommended action, we are requesting that the Board approve an amount not to exceed \$300,000, and grant authority to continue to acquire these services through the Purchase Order process for a period not to exceed 180 days. This will provide sufficient time to conduct a solicitation and prepare a contract for Board approval.

### **IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)**

The proposed extended Purchase Order authority is needed to continue uninterrupted interpretation and translation services provided to the public by various County departments.

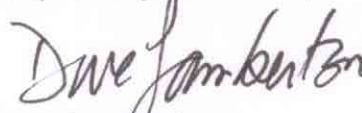
Approval of this action will authorize ISD to order and pay for these services until such time as a formal solicitation can be accomplished and a contract prepared for Board approval.

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**CONCLUSION**

Upon approval by the Board of Supervisors, the Executive Office, Board of Supervisors is requested to return an adopted copy of this letter to the Interim Director, Internal Services Department, 1100 N. Eastern Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90063.

Respectfully submitted,



Dave Lambertson  
Interim Director

DL:sg

c: Chief Administrative Officer  
Auditor-Controller  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

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